

FACT SHEET

URCD FS-06

Conservation District
December 1991



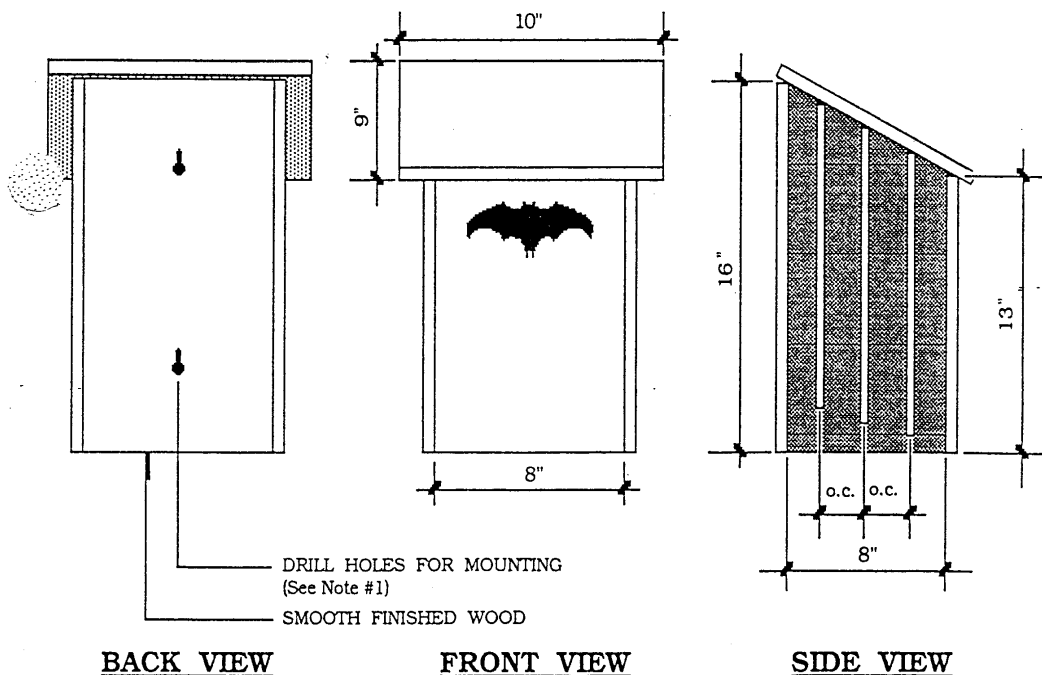
BAT HOUSES

Fear of things we do not understand is a well documented aspect of human behavior and is a problem faced by today's bats. Unfortunately, lack of knowledge, late night horror movies, myths and/or superstitions about this amazing flying mammal leave us to believe that bats are harmful.

Bats are wonderful creatures who fly during the night looking for insects to eat. Seventy percent of the bat species eat insects. Few bats are carnivorous - hunting small vertebrates, such as fish, frogs, mice and birds. There are only 3 species of the much persecuted vampire bat which are found only in Latin America. All bats in the United States and Canada are insectivores and are major predators of night-flying insects, included mosquitoes and numerous crop pests. The bat's eyes and echolocation technique

enable them to see well in dim light as they search for food, primarily at dusk. Under a controlled study, scientists found that bats are capable of catching up to 600 mosquitoes per hour. Large colonies consume countless billions of insects each season.

The mouse-eared bat (genus *Myotis*) is the most widely distributed species in North America. Color of these local bats can range from brown or russet to gray. All are small with wingspans ranging from 222 mm to 315 mm. Mouse-eared bats occupy a wide variety of summer roosts, including caves, buildings, and tree hollows. Summer roosts are abandoned in August or September for a winter roost. Some colonies travel up to 200 miles or more to reach the nearest suitable cave for their six to eight month hibernation.



CONSTRUCTION NOTES FOR SMALLER BAT

USE:

1. Use 2" finishing nails when constructing the house. Mount the Bat House on 3" nails.
2. Western cedar or redwood will withstand out

door exposure better than pine or plywood; although they are all suitable.

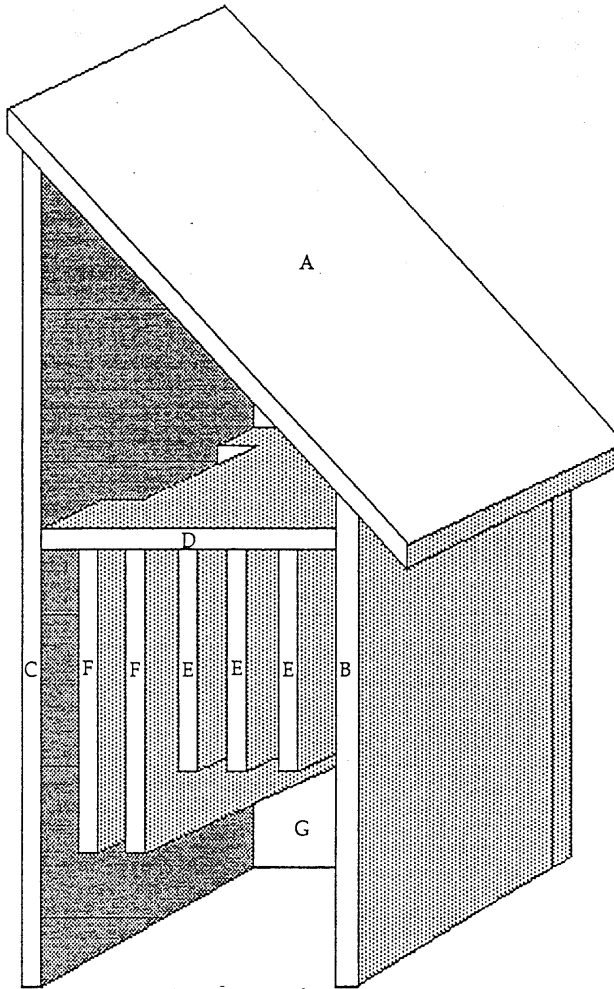
3. Use 1/2" rough sawed wood for the interior walls. Secure the interior walls o.c. (equal distances on center). These walls are to be cut 13 inches in length and the same width of the back exterior wall.

Bats are the only mammals that truly fly. Their large tough skinned wings are well suited for flying. A bat is relatively helpless when it's on the ground because of its weak legs whose knees bend backward. Their backfeet have tiny sharp claws allowing them to hang upside down from walls, cave ceilings, old buildings, or in the canopy of a tree.

But aren't bats rabid? Rabies come in different forms. Bats usually contract a form of rabies which only effects rodents and is not considered dangerous to humans, although bats are susceptible to rabies just as any other animal. The highest percent of rabies in humans is contracted through dogs and cats. Our best defense against rabies is having our dogs and cats vaccinated. Any bat that could be caught may be sick, but not necessarily with rabies. Sick bats, as any other sick animal, should be approached with caution and should never be picked up without wearing leather gloves.

Bats need dark places to rest during the day. They could be attracted to your property by providing a bat house (see diagram to build your own bat house). Build your bat house and locate it in a high place, 10 to 15 feet off the ground, facing east or southeast to catch the morning sun. The entrance should be free of obstructions such as branches. When building your bat house, keep in mind that the bat hangs by its tiny claws on its back feet; thus, rough wood on the interior of the house would offer better foot hold than smooth wood. Once in place, it may take as long as a year before bats take up residency.

We are providing you with two bat house designs. The larger house, designed by the Bat Conservation International, can occupy a hundred or more bats. The smaller design could house as many as 20 bats.



DIMENSIONS:

- A. ROOF 16 1/2" x 11 1/4"
- B. FRONT 18 3/4" x 9 1/4"
- C. BACK 27" x 9 1/4"
- D. CEILING 9 3/4" x 9 1/4"
- E. PARTITIONS 9 1/4" wide x 8" high
- F. PARTITIONS 9 1/4" wide x 14" high
- G. SIDES 11 1/4" wide x 27" at back, 18 3/4" at front

CONSTRUCTION NOTES FOR LARGE BAT HOUSE:

1. Use 2" finishing nails when constructing the house.
2. Western cedar or redwood will withstand outdoor exposure better than pine or plywood; although they are all suitable.
3. Use 1/2" rough sawed wood for the interior walls. Spacing between partitions front to back: 3/4", 3/4", 3/4", 1", 1 1/2", 1 1/4".
4. Mount the bat house on 3" nails.

REFERENCES

- T. Merlin D. 1990. *America's Neighborhood Bats*. University of Texas Press, Austin.

This fact sheet was created by Diane Hefner, Ulatis Resource Conservation District Technician (916) 678-1655.

All SCS & RCD programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, marital status, or those physically challenged.